



Finding Your Way— Resources for Early Career Researchers *Tips from the National Institute on Aging*

Entry of new investigators into the ranks of independent, NIH-funded researchers is essential to the health of this country's biomedical research enterprise...

From National Institutes of Health (NIH) Statement of Commitment to New and Early Stage Investigators

National Institute on Aging's (NIA) mission is to improve the health and well-being of older people through basic, clinical, and social and behavioral research. Part of this mission is to train and develop scientists who one day may become leaders in the field of aging research.

NIA supports four divisions of extramural research. The division that most closely matches your research interest may be able to offer guidance about funding and training opportunities specific to your area of expertise.

Division of Aging Biology (DAB) focuses on understanding basic molecular, genetic, cellular, and physiological mechanisms underlying the processes of aging and age-related changes in humans and in animal models. For more information, contact: DABquery@nia.nih.gov.

Division of Behavioral and Social Research (DBSR) supports basic research on aging at the individual and population levels. DBSR examines how people change over the adult life course and the societal impact of changing age demographics. For more information, contact: DBSRquery@nia.nih.gov.

Division of Geriatrics and Clinical Gerontology (DGCG) investigates factors contributing to health and disease in older people and over the course of the human lifespan. This includes looking at aging's relationship to health outcomes and funding clinical trials. For more information, contact: DGCGquery@nia.nih.gov.

Division of Neuroscience (DN) seeks to understand the neural and behavioral processes associated with the aging nervous system. DN also supports basic, clinical, and epidemiological studies of Alzheimer's disease and other neurodegenerative diseases associated with aging. NIA is legislatively designated as the lead Federal agency on Alzheimer's research. For more information, contact: DNquery@nia.nih.gov.

Contact **Division of Extramural Activities (DEA)** for general information about research supported by NIA and answers to your grant-related questions. If it is unclear what division to contact regarding your research interest, DEA can help direct you to the right NIA program area.

Email: DEAquery@nia.nih.gov
Phone: 1-301-496-9322

NIA Opportunities for New Investigators

NIA has several programs to support predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows and clinically trained individuals interested in studying aging processes, age-related diseases, and the special problems and needs of older people. NIA also hosts several professional development workshops around the U.S. that teach skills critical for becoming a successful, federally funded scientist. The research and training section of NIA's website has the most current information about funding and training opportunities and application deadlines: www.nia.nih.gov/research.

The following is a selection of grants and training programs that might be of particular interest to early career scientists.

Funding opportunities

The NIH **Office of Extramural Research (OER)** has complete information on the grants process, including application forms and information on grant policies. OER's website includes the NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts, a searchable database of all of NIH's Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs), Requests for Applications (RFAs), and Policy Notices: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm>.

Mentored Career Development Awards (K-awards) are available for junior to mid-career faculty with a health professional doctorate who are interested in basic, clinical, and translational research, in areas related to the NIA mission. K-awards can also support

postdoctoral fellows within 5 years of their doctorate and junior faculty who are developing or expanding their research program in the area of aging and geriatrics. See www.nia.nih.gov/research/dea/nia-new-and-early-stage-investigators.

Paul B. Beeson Career Development Award Program (K08 and K23) supports career development of clinically trained faculty who are committed to basic, patient-oriented, or translational aging research. The program is co-sponsored by the NIA with the John A. Hartford Foundation and the American Federation for Aging Research. See <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-AG-12-003.html> (K08) and <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-AG-12-004.html> (K23).

Predocutorial and Postdoctoral Fellowship Awards (F-awards, also known as National Research Service Awards, or NRSA) support individual predoctoral (F30, F31) and postdoctoral (F32) projects for those working on a research or health professional doctorate. Fellowships provide a stipend, tuition and fees, and training-related expenses. The NIA F30 award supports students in combined MD-PhD programs. Additional NRSA awards include the Individual Predocutorial Fellowships to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research (F31) and the NRSA for Senior Fellows (F33). See http://grants.nih.gov/training/F_files_nrsa.htm.

Institutional Training Grants (T-awards) are awarded to institutions to support annual or short-term (summer) research and training opportunities for predoctoral, postdoctoral, or medical students. See www.nia.nih.gov/research/dea/institutional-training-grants.

Medical Student Training in Aging Research (MSTAR) Program (T35) encourages medical students, particularly those interested in research, to consider a career in academic geriatrics. NIA partners with the American Federation for Aging Research and several foundations to offer 8- to 12-week MSTAR Program scholarships to first and second year medical students, providing hands-on and didactic research training in aging and geriatrics. See www.afar.org/research/funding/mstar.

Grants for Early Medical/Surgical Specialists' Transition to Aging Research (GEMSSTAR) (R03) provide a first independent research award to physicians who have recently completed training in their medical or surgical sub-specialty and who wish to pursue research in aging-related aspects of their sub-specialty. Competitive applicants must secure additional support to pursue a professional development plan in order to receive the R03 award. See <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-AG-12-002.html>.

Research Project Grants (R01) support projects performed by an independent investigator (or investigators) in an area representing his/her (their) specific interests and competencies. Providing R01 support to new and early-stage investigators is one of NIA's highest priorities. NIA, like many other NIH Institutes, provides an advantage in the funding line for new and early-stage investigator R01 applications relative to established investigator applications. NIA policies in support of new and early-stage investigators can be found at www.nia.nih.gov/research/dea/nia-new-and-early-stage-investigators. If you are not sure whether you are considered a new or early-stage investigator, see NIH's definition at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/new_investigators/index.htm.

Training opportunities

NIA Summer Institute on Aging Research is an intensive week-long program to provide fellows and junior faculty with an introduction to aging research. Participants learn from the Institute's scientists and grantees about NIA's research portfolio, including topics such as designing effective research projects, applying for funding, talking with the media, and addressing challenges related to conducting research with diverse cohorts.

NIA Grants Technical Assistance Workshop is a 2-day interactive forum with lectures on a spectrum of aging-research topics and on applying for NIA grants. Workshop participants present current or planned research projects and receive feedback from peers and NIA staff. The workshop is held immediately before the annual scientific meeting of the Gerontological Society of America.

NIA Director's Regional Meeting on Aging Research is a 1-day meeting, every other year, hosted by different regions across the country. Investigators new to aging research and those underrepresented in the field have the chance to receive hands-on technical assistance in grant writing, as well as personalized feedback and advice about their research abstracts from NIA program officers. Participants also receive information on other NIA research and training opportunities.

Tutorials on grant writing

"All About Grants" tutorials help investigators plan and write grant applications and manage their awards. See www.niaid.nih.gov/researchfunding/grant/pages/aag.aspx.

Federal Support for Funding Aging Research Outside of NIA

Administration on Aging (AoA), part of HHS, supports projects to develop a comprehensive, coordinated, and cost-effective system of home- and community-based services helping older people maintain their health and independence. See www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Grants.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), also part of HHS, has a mission to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans. See www.ahrq.gov.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Healthy Aging Initiative hosts the Prevention Research Centers Healthy Aging Research Network to assist in developing a national research and dissemination agenda related to the public health aspects of healthy aging. See www.cdc.gov/aging/han. Additionally, CDC, part of HHS, in partnership with The Atlantic Philanthropies foundation supports a Health and Aging Policy Fellow. See www.healthandagingpolicy.org.

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), part of HHS, administers the Medicare program and monitors State Medicaid

programs. CMS offers researchers and other health care professionals a broad range of quantitative information on their programs, including estimates of future Medicare and Medicaid spending or enrollment, spending, and claims data. CMS also conducts demonstration projects to explore alternative policies of health care coverage and delivery. See www.cms.gov.

Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Aging Initiative is a Federal effort to protect the environmental health of older people. As part of this Initiative, the EPA funds a variety of related projects, listed online, at www.epa.gov/aging/grants.

The Community of Science (COS) is a comprehensive, web-based source of funding information for a broad array of research interests. The COS maintains a database of more than 25,000 records from private foundations, public agencies, national and local governments, corporations, and organizations worldwide, representing over \$33 billion in funding opportunities. Individuals can join COS without charge. Many universities also use the service. See <http://fundingopps.cos.com>.

For more information about health and aging, contact:

National Institute on Aging Information Center

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Gaithersburg, MD 20898-8057

1-800-222-2225 (toll-free)

1-800-222-4225 (TTY/toll-free)

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